

Encounters with Christ

Week 6 — **Mary and Martha** — Luke 10:38-42, John 11:1-44

Prepare...

As you begin, take a moment to pray and focus on the Lord as you come into his presence and study his word.

“I lift my eyes to you, O God, in worship and adoration. I focus on your promises and expect your grace. I gather all my needs and desires and bring them to you in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.” —Eugene Peterson, *Praying with the Psalms*

Jesus is on His way to Jerusalem. He knows His journey will end there. However, His ministry is far from being over, as there is much He has yet to teach the disciples. On the way, Jesus and His disciples stop in Bethany, at the house of Mary and Martha...

Begin by familiarizing yourself with the text. Read the passage two times.

Answer the questions: Who? What? When? Where? Why? How?

Record in detail what you learn about Mary and Martha.

Record any other questions or thoughts you have about the text. Are there parts you don't understand? What spoke to you the most?

Memory Verse for the Week...

Ps. 84:5-7

“Happy are those whose strength is in you. They go from strength to strength.”

Are you stressed?

Psalms 27:3-5

“Though an army besiege me, my heart will not fear; though war break out against me, even then will I be confident. One thing I ask of the Lord, this is what I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord and to seek him in his temple. For in the day of trouble he will keep me safe in his dwelling; he will hide me in the shelter of his tabernacle and set me high upon a rock.”

Ecclesiastes 3:9-14

“What does the worker gain from his toil?” I have seen the burden God has laid on men. He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the hearts of men; yet they cannot fathom what God has done from beginning to end. I know that there is nothing better for men than to be happy and do good while they live. That everyone may eat and drink, and find satisfaction in all his toil—this is the gift of God. I know that everything God does will endure forever; nothing can be added to it and nothing taken from it. God does it so that men will revere him.”

Proverbs 10:22

“The blessing of the Lord brings wealth, and he adds no trouble to it.”

Psalms 37:7

“Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him; do not fret when men succeed in their ways.”

A lesson in discipleship:

Most of the material between Luke 9:51 and 11:3 is aimed at instructing the disciples. The story of Mary and Martha is about truly welcoming Jesus by listening to what He says. Waiting quietly on the Lord is more important than bustling busyness.

“The three times you see Mary in Scripture she is at the Savior’s feet—on the occasion of this visit, at the death of her brother, and when she anoints his feet with perfume shortly before his death. Her physical posture reflects the posture of her heart. Humble. Reverent. Teachable. All the qualities of a good disciple. And there she sits, drinking in every word

A closer look...

1. We read elsewhere in the gospels that both sisters, Mary and Martha, lived in Bethany (John 11:1), about two miles from Jerusalem. In this passage, who is opening up her home to Jesus? (v. 38)

2. Since Martha is the hostess on this occasion, why does she get indignant when her sister Mary does not help her? (v. 40)

3. In your own words, describe both Mary and Martha as they are presented in this story.

What do you see as the difference between them?

4. We get the impression that Martha wanted to do something really special for Jesus. But before she knew it, she was overloaded with all the preparations and work. Finally, she couldn’t stand it any longer. What does Martha reproach Mary for?

For what does she reproach Jesus?

5. Jesus’ reply to Martha is full of love and understanding. In your own words, what is He saying to her?

6. This is not the first time Martha feels overwhelmed with things. Read John 11:1-44 to learn about a very difficult time in Martha’s life. What does she reproach Jesus for then (vv 11:21-27)?

7. How did Jesus help her faith grow in John 11:25?

8. Martha’s worries about so many things end up making her fret and fuss. Jesus contrasts her “many things” with only “one thing” needed. What did Mary choose that was better?

9. Today’s passage is placed right after the parable of the Good Samaritan, which is the answer to a man’s question about what one needs to “do” to inherit eternal life (Luke 10:25). How does the account of Jesus’ visit with Mary and Martha counterbalance the teaching of the parable?

10. In Psalm 27:4 (see “Are you stressed” in the sidebar) David is also asking “one thing” from the Lord. What is it?

How does it compare to the “one thing” that will not be taken away from Mary?

11. If you could ask “one thing” of God, what would it be?

12. What are the “many worries” that hinder you from asking for it? Take some time in prayer to put them before the Lord. Then “be still” before Him, ready to listen. What do you hear?

13. Look back on your responses on page one. Are there any questions you still have that are unanswered?

that pours so sweetly from his lips.
—Ken Gire, *Intimate Moments with the Savior*

“A friend of mine was in Israel a few years ago and saw a rabbi go into a bathroom and his talmidim followed him. They didn’t want to miss anything the rabbi might say or do. This kind of devotion is what it means to be a disciple.”—Rob Bell, *Velvet Elvis*

“The way in which I show God that I neither love nor respect Him is by the obtuseness of my heart and mind towards what He says. What hinders me from hearing is that I am taken up with other things. It is not that I will not hear God, but I am not devoted in the right place. I am devoted to things, to service, but I do not hear Him.” —Oswald Chambers, *My Utmost for His Highest*

Solitude

Jesus said, “Come off by yourselves; let’s take a break and get a little rest.” Mark 6:31, *The Message*

“Solitude is the soul’s best friend.” —Charles Cotton

“I love people. I love my family, my children...but inside myself is a place where I live all alone and that’s where you renew your springs that never dry up.” — Pearl S. Buck

“It is in deep solitude that I find the gentleness with which I can truly love my brothers. The more solitary I am the more affection I have for them... Solitude and silence teach me to love my brothers for what they are, not for what they say.” —Thomas Merton

“Loneliness is the poverty of self; solitude is the richness of self.” —May Sorton

“One thing”

Life has few real necessities and at need we can do without much on which we lavish time. The one thing is not defined, but clearly it finds expression in Mary’s sitting at Jesus’ feet, learning from him. It is the attitude of dependence on Jesus that matters. She has chosen the good portion, which shall not be taken away from her. The right spiritual attitude is a possession we need never fear losing. —Leon Morris, *Luke*